

Amendment to the Claims:

The following listing of claims replaces all previous versions and listings of claims:

1. (Currently amended) A method for providing automated call acknowledgement services over a communications network, comprising:

receiving a data request from a call-receiving device to acknowledge an incoming call from a calling device;

retrieving a pre-defined acknowledgement message from a database; [[and]]

sending ~~said~~the pre-defined acknowledgement message to ~~said~~the calling device; and

sending the incoming call to a voicemail system of the call-receiving device;

wherein ~~said~~the sending an acknowledgement message to ~~said~~the calling device is implemented in lieu of answering ~~said~~the incoming call.

2. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein ~~said~~the sending an acknowledgement message includes transmitting ~~said~~the pre-defined acknowledgement message in text form.

3. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein ~~said~~the sending an acknowledgement message includes transmitting ~~said~~the pre-defined acknowledgement message in voice form.

4. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein ~~said~~the pre-defined acknowledgement message is created by a user of ~~said~~the automated call acknowledgement services.

5. (Currently amended) The method of claim 3, further comprising creating a call request, ~~said~~the call request including:

a phone number for a calling party;

a phone number for saidthe call-receiving device; and

saidthe pre-defined acknowledgement message converted into voice format.

6. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

storing a phone number for a calling party device;

storing a text address of saidthe calling party device; and

mapping saidthe phone number for saidthe calling party device to saidthe text address of saidthe calling party device operable for selecting a mode of transmission for saidthe pre-defined acknowledgement message.

7. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

storing a message type;

storing a pre-defined acknowledgement message; and

mapping saidthe message type to saidthe pre-defined acknowledgement message operable for linking pre-defined acknowledgement messages to message types displayed on saidthe call-receiving device and retrieving associated pre-defined acknowledgement messages from storage for transmission to saidthe calling device.

8. (Currently amended) A system for providing automated call acknowledgement services over a communications network, comprising:

a call-receiving device receiving a call from a calling device;

an automated call acknowledgement service executing on a server, saidthe automated call acknowledgement service in communication with saidthe call-receiving device and saidthe calling device;

a data request; and

a pre-defined acknowledgement message generated by saidthe automated call acknowledgement service;

wherein saidthe pre-defined acknowledgement message is sent to saidthe calling device in lieu of answering saidthe incoming call, and the call is sent to a voicemail system of the call-receiving device.

9. (Currently amended) The system of claim 8, further comprising:

a calling customer profile database in communication with saidthe automated call acknowledgement service, saidthe calling customer profile database storing:

text addresses for calling parties; and

phone numbers for calling parties, saidthe phone numbers mapped to corresponding text addresses.

10. (Currently amended) The system of claim 8, further comprising:

a called customer profile database in communication with saidthe automated call acknowledgement service, saidthe called customer profile database storing:

personal data of call-receiving parties associated with saidthe call-receiving devices, saidthe personal data including phone numbers of saidthe call-receiving parties; and

pre-defined acknowledgement messages associated with message type options, saidthe pre-defined acknowledgement messages mapped to corresponding message type options.

11. (Currently amended) The system of claim 8, wherein saidthe voice/text indicator selection includes an option operable for sending an acknowledgement message in at least one of a voice format and a text format, saidthe voice/text indicator selection being selectable by a user on saidthe call-receiving device.

12. (Original) The system of claim 8, further comprising a call request operable for initiating a text-to-voice conversion of a pre-defined acknowledgement message.

13. (Currently amended) The system of claim 12, wherein ~~said~~the call request includes a delay field operable for preventing premature ~~placing transmission of [[a]] the pre-defined acknowledgement message~~ call to the calling device to allow time for a caller of the calling device to complete a voicemail message at the voicemail system of the call-receiving device ~~an originator of said incoming call.~~

14. (Currently amended) A storage medium encoded with machine-readable computer program code for providing automated call acknowledgement services over a communications network, ~~said~~the storage medium including instructions for causing a computer to implement a method, comprising:

receiving a data request from a call-receiving device to acknowledge an incoming call from a calling device;

retrieving a pre-defined acknowledgement message from a database; [[and]]

sending ~~said~~the pre-defined acknowledgement message to ~~said~~the calling device; and

sending the incoming call to a voicemail system of the call-receiving device;

wherein ~~said~~the sending an acknowledgement message to ~~said~~the calling device is implemented in lieu of answering ~~said~~the incoming call.

15. (Currently amended) The storage medium of claim 14, wherein ~~said~~the sending an acknowledgement message includes transmitting ~~said~~the pre-defined acknowledgement message in text form.

16. (Currently amended) The storage medium of claim 14, wherein ~~said~~the sending an acknowledgement message includes transmitting ~~said~~the pre-defined acknowledgement message in voice form.

17. (Currently amended) The storage medium of claim 14, wherein ~~said~~the pre-defined acknowledgement message is created by a user of ~~said~~the automated call acknowledgement services.

18. (Currently amended) The storage medium of claim 16, further comprising instructions for causing saidthe computer to create a call request, saidthe call request including:

a phone number for a calling party;

a phone number for saidthe call-receiving device; and

saidthe pre-defined acknowledgement message converted into voice format.

19. (Currently amended) The storage medium of claim 14, further comprising instructions for causing saidthe computer to implement:

storing a phone number for a calling party device;

storing a text address of saidthe calling party device; and

mapping saidthe phone number for saidthe calling party device to saidthe text address of saidthe calling party device operable for selecting a mode of transmission for saidthe pre-defined acknowledgement message.

20. (Currently amended) The storage medium of claim 14, further comprising instructions for causing saidthe computer to implement:

storing a message type;

storing a pre-defined acknowledgement message; and

mapping saidthe message type to saidthe pre-defined acknowledgement message operable for linking pre-defined acknowledgement messages to message types displayed on saidthe call-receiving device and retrieving associated pre-defined acknowledgement messages from storage for transmission to saidthe calling device.

21. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein saidthe data request includes:

a phone number for saidthe call-receiving device;

at least one of a phone number and text address for ~~said~~the calling device;

a message type; and

a voice/text indicator selection.

22. (Currently amended) The system of claim 8, wherein ~~said~~the data request includes:

a phone number for ~~said~~the call-receiving device;

at least one of a phone number and text address for ~~said~~the calling device;

a message type; and

a voice/text indicator selection.

23. (Currently amended) The storage medium of claim 14, wherein ~~said~~the data request includes:

a phone number for ~~said~~the call-receiving device;

at least one of a phone number and text address for ~~said~~the calling device;

a message type; and

a voice/text indicator selection.